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His customers want only the best of the best, and luxe (wine) bounty hunter Mark Pope scours the valley for just that. A huge inventory of eclectic wines is at your complete disposal. *Playboy* magazine called it the purveyor of "the world's best affordable luxuries". The store has a large following of very devoted wine collectors, and Pope prides himself on staying ahead of the curve on the next trend in wine circles, stocking "what you want before you know you want it." Another reason to visit Bounty Hunter is its impeccable wine bar.

 Tu-W 11a-10p, Th-Sa 11a-mid, Su 11a-10p



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Archived Issues

21 Ultimate Gifts: Thy Cup Runneth Over

Sheila Gibson Stoodley

21 Ultimate Gifts, December 2005



The business attire for Napa Valley wine finder Mark Steven Pope includes jeans—Wranglers, in fact—rather than a suit. His sartorial choice stems from an observation he made during his previous two-decade career as a pharmaceutical company executive, a position that often required him to dine with and entertain clients. “The executives seemed sheepish about their wine knowledge,” he recalls. “I thought, why not have a fun, irreverent voice in wine?”

21^{Ultimate}
GIFTS



Pope became that voice in 1994 when he founded Bounty Hunter, a company that searches for select wines and offers them through the catalog that it publishes twice yearly. Pope’s approach to wine apparently is as successful as his talent for spotting vintages, because Bounty Hunter’s growth has been swift. The catalog’s first edition, which appeared in December 1994, included 45 wines in its 16 pages and had a press run of 40,000 copies. The most recent catalog, published in September 2005, described 175 wines on 34 pages and had a press run of 1.5 million copies.



The 2004 Premiere Napa Valley wine auction included one-of-a-kind bottlings from Cliff Lede Vineyards, Juslyn Vineyards, and Marston Family Vineyard. (*Click image to enlarge*)

Pope, 54, estimates that he and his sales staff, whom he calls “wine scouts,” taste 4,000 wines per year (about 1,500 of which come from California), and he says that Bounty Hunter sells only 10 percent of what its staff tastes. “What we’re about is discovery,” he says. “Our job is to kiss the frogs. We suffer for your benefit, but the research is not pure hell.”

Joking aside, Pope and his team distinguish themselves by attempting to deduce what you will want to drink next, as well as what you want to drink now. In assembling this gift, which also includes attendance at an exclusive auction and a newly constructed, fully stocked wine cellar, Pope will practice this concept, which he calls the “continuum of wine enjoyment.” “If we understand what your palate is, we can suggest things for where you want to end up,” he says. Palates evolve, he explains, citing the example of a person who initially

enjoys round, rich, oaky wine and then, over time, develops a preference for crisp, mineral-laden vintages. "In truth," he says, "nobody trades down in wine." This package includes attendance at the Premiere Napa Valley wine auction, a trade-only event held by the Napa Valley Vintner's association each February at Greystone, the Saint Helena, Calif., campus of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA). The lots are made expressly for the auction, and proceeds go to charity and educational endeavors. You will attend as the guest of Bounty Hunter, and the firm's officials will bid on your behalf.

Bounty Hunter will fill your custom-designed cellar with vintages that suit your palate.
(Click image to enlarge)



Examples of lots that Bounty Hunter purchased at the February 2005 auction include five cases of a 2003 barrel-fermented Cabernet Sauvignon by Bob Levy of Harlan Estates, and 10 cases of 2003 Joseph Phelps Vineyards Backus Premiere Cabernet Sauvignon.

Bounty Hunter will arrange attendance at private advance wine tastings with winemakers who will participate in the 2006 event. Also, it can arrange meetings with winemakers of your choice, such as Shari and Garen Staglin, vintner/owners of Staglin Family Vineyards; Heidi Barrett, winemaker at Showket; Greg and Petra Martin, vintner/owners of Martin Estate; and Boots Brounstein, co-owner of Diamond Creek Vineyards.

You will house your auction acquisitions in a new wine cellar that Grotto Custom Wine Cellars of Oceanside, Calif., will build. Grotto can create, for example, a 10,000-bottle cellar with separate rooms for reds and whites and sparkling wines, all connected by a tasting room.

Bounty Hunter will assist you in filling this cellar, case by case, with selections that suit your palate. In addition to a wealth of wines from California, possible cellar choices include Château Lafite, Château Margaux, Château d'Yquem, Domaine de la Romanée Conti, Roederer Cristal Champagne, and Penfolds Grange.

PRICE

Starting at \$999,999.

The wine cellar will take a minimum of three months to construct.

CONTACT

Bounty Hunter, 800.943.9463

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by Lisa Taggart

Napa's dream

A river-centered revival in the heart of the Wine Country



River floods leave fertile soil in their wake, the silver lining to the havoc wrought. But instead of cropland, the Napa River is repaying its namesake city with a revitalized downtown scene. Though a long-term restoration project is still years from completion, local riverfront culture has already bloomed.

The new gallery-cum-nightclub in the overhauled 1884 Napa Mill complex epitomizes the city's focus on the arts. By day, the space exhibits

regional and contemporary artists as MJ Schärer Gallery (9–6 daily; 500 Main St.; 707/251-3726); by night, it jumps as a jazz club, DG's (closed Mon–Wed; admission varies; 707/253-8474). "There's a lot going on here," says Michael Schärer, the gallery's owner. "The whole face of the downtown and riverfront is changing."

Sleek Celadon (\$\$\$; lunch Mon–Fri, dinner daily; 500 Main; 707/254-9690), with its Mediterranean cuisine, relocated to the Napa Mill in September 2002. In fact, the business district teems with good choices: Pilar (\$\$\$; lunch Tue–Sat, dinner Mon–Sat; 807 Main;



Lindsay Miller

Satisfy your sweet tooth at Sweetie Pies

707/252-4474) has delicious California cuisine with French and Spanish influences; the menu at elegant new Restaurant Budo (\$\$\$\$; lunch and dinner Mon–Sat; 1650 Soscol Ave.; 707/224-2330) features Asian-accented dishes. Plus, don't miss the gorgeous and extravagantly good cakes at Sweetie Pies (520 Main; 707/257-7280).

Of
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quickly Raise a glass at Bounty Hunter Rare Wine & Provisions
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Bounty Hunter Rare Wine & Provisions (975 First St.; 707/255-0622) is an old favorite, specializing in uncommon bottles. And the free Napa Downtown Trolley (www.nctpa.net/trolley or 707/255-7631) means visitors don't have to drive. *

Food-and-wine museum Copia (closed Tue; \$13; 500 First; 707/259-1600) remains the town's anchor; another classic draw is the lovely 1879 Napa Valley Opera House (1030 Main; www.nvoh.org or 707/226-7372), which reopened in 2003.

But the place hasn't gone too upscale. A new \$15 wine-tasting card (www.napadowntown.com) promotes savings. With the card, you get 10-cent pours at 10 locations as well as admission to Copia. That's a deal in Napa's resurgent downtown.



On the riverfront

The city of Napa is 55 miles north of San Francisco. For information, visit www.napavalley.org or www.napariverfront.com or call 707/226-7459.

Eureka Cartography

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Rick Vansickle

Calgary Sun

May 2, 2004

NAPA VALLEY, California — Some musings from a recent trip to Napa Valley.

.....

Barbara Richards? Well, she's the same. Husband Jim? Same thing. Unfazed. Then there's son Sheldon. He's on top of the world ... OK, on top of Napa Valley. Literally!

When last I met up with the Richards family it was to taste their exquisite Paloma 2001 Merlot and Syrah. But in between our last visit and this trip, the tiny winery on top of Spring Mountain, has become the centre of attention in the wine world. Also, since then, Sheldon has left his hometown of Calgary to help out his parents at Paloma.

Their merlot was named the Wine Spectator's wine of the year, giving it the highest score for any California merlot in the magazine's history — 95 points out of a 100.

"It's still kind of like a dream. It's a shock," says Barbara, who would rather not have all the attention foisted on Paloma.

The problem for Paloma (and snicker if you want), is the fact they are maxed out on vines. They cannot make another drop of wine (about 2,500 cases of merlot and a smaller amount of syrah).

And, with the attention, everyone wants a case or two.

Jim says the phone started ringing off the hook the second the magazine announced the wine of the year. By that time, it was pretty much sold out.

It's gotten so bad that the Richards even begged the Wine Spectator not to review a small lot of cabernet sauvignon it produced, the first time the cab has been bottled separately from the merlot (it's usually used as a blending wine).

But James Laube of the Spectator was over-ruled by his editors and the 2001 Paloma Cabernet Sauvignon received a whopping 95 points — and it only produced 64 cases!

Before we left the Richards, Jim poured us some of the 2002 merlot and, I believe, it will only get worse for these down-to-earth wine folks.

The '02 unmistakably follows in the footsteps of their masterpiece '01 with layers of cherry and blackberry and laced with coffee, smoke and earth.

And, if you ever get the chance, try the syrah from Paloma. There is none better in the Napa Valley.

The 2003 out of the barrel is a beefy broth with sweet raw meat and gushing blueberry fruit. An intricate wine with twists and turns guaranteed to blow your mind. Willow Park is trying to work a deal to get the wines to Calgary.

.....

Down on the valley floor, smack dab in the middle of this wine mecca, a Canadian is leaving his mark.

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Cliff Lede, who owns Ledcor Construction based in Vancouver and with a big office in Edmonton, is living his dream after taking ownership of the S. Anderson winery in Stags Leap District of the Napa Valley.

S. Anderson was a family-owned producer of still and sparkling wines with 55 acres of estate vineyards planted to the five red Bordeaux varieties — cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc, petite verdot, and malbec. In addition, a 15-acre estate vineyard on Mount Veeder yields cabernet sauvignon and chardonnay. Other wines are produced with purchased grapes from Napa growers.

And Lede has ambitious plans which he shared with us over dinner at Napa's best Italian eatery, Bistro Don Giovanni's.

Look for two new luxury wines — Cliff Lede (an estate cabernet) and Poetry (a Bordeaux-style blend) — and the opening of the Poetry Inn, a posh B & B located in the hills east of the Silverado Trail.

The inn has staggering vistas of the Napa Valley and his vineyards. The rooms will range in size from 600 to 1,200 sq. ft. and will have private decks and outside showers.

Over dinner, Lede treated us to a wide-range of his wines. We were all impressed with the range and in particular the new Cliff Lede 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon Stags Leap District.

It's a massive wine with blackberry fruit mingling with vanilla. Black currants gush in the mouth and cinnamon, herbs and cedar give it a gorgeous edge.

Lede is devoted to his new venture and is an unpretentious wine lover.

"We want people to find their way to this relatively undiscovered gem on the Yountville Cross Road and enjoy the poetry of all the beautiful things in life that we have here: Wine, art, music, nature and architecture," he says.

Our new favourite place to unwind after a hard day's tasting in the Napa Valley is the amazing Bounty Hunter wine/restaurant/ store in the town of Napa.

I'd heard of it but never visited until this recent trip. The owner is Mark Pope, a.k.a the Bounty Hunter, who has made it his mission in life to hunt down California's hottest, most elusive premium wines and sell them at his store.

"We find the wines you want before you know you want them. Fact is, if it's not great, we don't sell it," says Pope.

The Bounty Hunter is set up like a restaurant with a wine bar at one end, tables at the other for diners and a huge library wall of newly discovered wines.

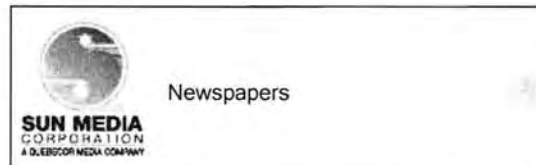
The idea is to pick your wine off the rack, pay retail prices and enjoy it with your meal.

For a wine lover, it's heaven. An entire wall of wines ahead of the curve and destined to become hot wines (our favourite new discovery was Andrew Murray Syrah Santa Ynez Valley 2001).

Says Pope, who's on site regularly serving his patrons: "You could literally shop by throwing a dart at this lineup and be thrilled with the outcome. If only choosing stocks were this easy."

Enjoy!

[Click HERE for previous WINE column: Get on Bordeaux](#)



Newspapers

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What's New in Napa?

By Robin Dalmas

Napa and Sonoma Valleys had fruity but unpretentious beginnings. In the 1820s, Franciscan fathers planted grape vines in Sonoma Valley to create sacramental wines. It wasn't until 1857, however, that a Hungarian count really got the party going. He imported European grape varieties to plant at Buena Vista Winery, the state's first major vineyard. California wine country has never been the same again.

Nowadays, the wine country is overflowing like a Bacchus cup with hundreds of wineries, restaurants and accommodations. It is so popular, the Napa Valley Conference and Visitors Bureau advises travelers to make reservations six months in advance.

Fortunately, Napa and Sonoma still have plenty of undiscovered secrets among their fog-shrouded hills. Due to space limitations, we can't mention them all. But here's a quick tasting of what's new for 2004.

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Vineyards

Pellegrini Family Vineyards has been operating its Olivet Lane vineyard in the Russian River Valley, Sonoma, since the 1970s. On June 1, it opened its winemaking facility to the public by appointment. The winery is devoted to classic Burgundian varietals, chardonnay and pinot noir. Private winemaking tours and tastings are available from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. For information visit www.pellegrinisonoma.com.

Spring Mountain Vineyard in St. Helena, Napa Valley, re-opened to the public this year. This vineyard is known for its Bordeaux-style red blends. The tour includes mountainside vineyards, historic caves and cultivated gardens. Tastings occur in the property's Victorian home, the former setting for the 1980s TV drama "Falcon Crest." Tour fee of \$25 per person is applicable to wine purchases. For information visit www.springmtn.com.

Kuleto Estate Family Vineyards in Napa Valley, which produces cabernet sauvignon, syrah, zinfandel, pinot noir and chardonnay, opened to the public on April 1. Tours of the 90-acre estate are available by appointment at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Tour and tasting fee is \$25 per person. For information visit www.kuletoestate.com.

Hotels

The River Terrace Inn, a boutique hotel along the river in downtown Napa, opened last fall. The inn has 106 guestrooms and suites with mini-bars featuring selections of Napa Valley wines. Restaurant Budo is scheduled to open this fall, featuring New American food with Asian influences. For information visit www.riverterraceinn.com.

The Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa, in operation for 75 years, recently completed a \$62 million restoration. All 97 historic rooms were redesigned. For information visit www.fairmont.com/sonoma.

Ranches

The posh Calistoga Ranch opened in upper Napa Valley on May 24. Situated on 170-acres, the ranch encompasses 27 owner lodges, 46 guest lodges, the Bathhouse spa, Lake Lommel, and the private Lakehouse restaurant and lounge. Room rates begin at \$525 and go to \$4,500 per night. For information visit www.calistogaranch.com.

Mayacamas Ranch is an 80-acre guest ranch and conference center in the Mayacamas Mountains on the border of Napa and Sonoma Counties. The ranch, which features

horsemanship and trail-riding programs, is opening to individual travelers this year. For information visit www.mayacamasranch.com/getaways/index.htm.

Bed and Breakfasts

The Inn of Imagination bed-and-breakfast opened in spring 2003 in Napa as a tribute to creative minds. The Charles Dodgson (aka Lewis Carroll) room captures the feel of Dodgson's Victorian era, and its private bath captures Alice's descent into the rabbit hole. Other rooms are devoted to Ted Geisel (Dr. Seuss) and Jimmy Buffett. For information visit www.innofimagination.com.

The Daughter's Inn bed-and-breakfast opened recently in Napa. This \$3 million turn-of-the-century mansion was built in the Art Deco Craftsman style. Its 10 rooms feature fireplaces and spa tubs for two. Breakfast features gourmet goodies such as sundried tomato and feta cheese frittata and cr me de caramel French toast. For information visit www.daughtersinn.com.

Restaurants

Napa and Sonoma boast a smorgasbord of new restaurants. Cafe 29 in St. Helena serves breakfast and lunch, focusing on an extensive crepe menu including the "Chardonnay," an exotic blend of grilled lemon chicken, coconut and pineapple. For information visit www.cafe29.com/index.htm.

Sonoma Saveurs in Sonoma is an intimate bistro housed in a historic adobe building. It features Mediterranean-style cuisine with a California twist and a wine bar with local, limited-production boutique wines. For information, visit www.sonomasaveurs.com.

Wine shops

Bounty Hunter Rare Wine & Provisions, which opened last year in downtown Napa, has recently expanded to include a wine bar, bistro and wine shop. Bounty Hunter offers more than 400 rare and luxury wines for sale. At night the bistro serves California fare with a Southern kick. For information visit www.bountyhunterwine.com.

Wine tastings

Napa boasts new collective tasting rooms where visitors can sample products of small family wineries. A Dozen Vintners Wine Tasting is at 3000 North Highway 29 in St. Helena. For information call (707) 967-0666. Tasting On Main is at 1142 Main Street in St. Helena. For information call (707) 967-1042.

Peju Province Winery, founded in 1982 in the Rutherford Bench region of Napa Valley, opened a new tasting room this spring. For information visit www.peju.com.

Gourmet food tastings


St. Helena Olive Oil Company in Napa Valley boasts dozens of tasting opportunities on its main floor, including an olive oil and balsamic vinegar tasting bar. For information visit www.sholiveoil.com/main.html.

Round Pond olive oil company in Napa Valley recently opened a production facility and tasting room. Private tours include tastings of olive oil, wine and vinegar. Tours are limited to six people per visit and cost \$20 per person. For information visit www.roundpond.com.

Spas

Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort in Calistoga, which for half a century has offered an array of treatments including mud baths and massages, has re-opened its facial and skincare salon. It offers a peaceful environment in a private bungalow amidst manicured gardens. For information visit www.drwilkinson.com.

Robin Dalm s is a freelance writer based in Redmond, Wash. She is the former travel editor and producer for MSNBC.com.

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SEARCH

Unusual varietals for the wine cellar

The hard part is determining which ones will be worth keeping

By Holly Hubbard Preston

Published: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2005

For richest and best

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Catawba was "the first really successful commercially produced American wine." While contemporary wine enthusiasts "wouldn't like it," the wine, according to Lukacs, "fit into the style and fashion of its day."

There are dozens of unusual or lesser-known varietals that could come into vogue in the next 5 to 10 years. Whether or not they will be a passing fancy, as was the case with Sparkling Pink Catawba, which fizzled by the 1870s, or become something more permanent is a big question.

Be prepared to read about Spanish tempranillos and Argentine malbec, along with South African pinotage and Canadian vidal blanc, maybe even Japanese koshu and a Burmese version of German dornfelder. All these varietals and many more are being bottled for mainstream consumption.

The fact is that wine consumers are going to be hearing more and more about offbeat varietals. The market for classic varietals is saturated, according to Liz Thach, co-author of a new book, "Wine: A Global Business."

With literally hundreds of thousands of labels, producers around the globe are feeling intense pressure to carve a niche for themselves.

Identifying the "keepers" in the bunch isn't going to be easy. According to "The Wine Bible," Karen MacNeil's massive compendium on all things wine, there are some 24,000 differently named wine varieties in the world. Of that number, only about 5,000 represent distinctly different grape varieties.

a benison on the giver.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Ode to Catawba Wine"

In the 1850s, a sparkling pink wine made from the catawba grape - grown on the slopes of the Miami River in Cincinnati - was the toast of the literati. Poets from Longfellow to Robert Browning sang the praises of the fizzy, sweet wine, putting it on a par with French Champagne.

Once in a great while, unusual varietals will come along that capture the imagination of wine enthusiasts, even sophisticated ones. According to Paul Lukacs, author of "American Vintage," published in 2000, Sparkling Pink

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Most of what is consumed, according to MacNeil's best-selling book, published in 2001, comes from 150 varieties, only nine of which are considered classic: chardonnay, chenin blanc, Riesling, sauvignon blanc and sémillon among whites; cabernet sauvignon, merlot, pinot noir and syrah for reds.

According to MacNeil, varietals with the potential to cross over into the "classic" category must have two things going for them: signs that they are being planted in different places around the globe and indications of growing consumer demand for them.

Based on those criteria, MacNeil singled out a handful of varietals that collectors interested in diversifying may want to acquire on a limited basis: tempranillo, garnacha (known as grenache in France, North America and Australia), malbec, nebbiolo, zinfandel and syrah (known as shiraz in Australia). Those are the varietals, MacNeil said, that "vintners with their ear to the ground" are planting.

If malbec, tempranillo and garnacha sound familiar, they should. All three are widely planted varieties. However, for centuries they have existed almost solely to be "blending grapes." Now, top-tier Argentine malbec, some of which sells for \$70 a bottle or more, is among the hottest imports in the U.S. market. A centuries-old French varietal used in making Bordeaux wines, malbec came into its own as a transplanted varietal in the Mendoza region of Argentina.

"I've been to Argentina twice and been really impressed with the wine," said Neil Aldoroty, owner of 55 Degrees, a wine storage and procurement business in St. Helena, California, a town in the Napa Valley. Still, Aldoroty reported that he had had a tough time tracking down some of his favorites. "It's just like in the beginning when we were trying to get top-end Italian," he said.

Some top labels to look for: Felipe Rutini Reserve Malbec, Cobos by Paul Hobbs and Santa Julia Reserve Malbec.

Tempranillo, a long-respected blend mate in Rioja and port wines, is also making a strong solo debut via Spanish producers, who, according to Lukacs, "can't be beat" for quality or value. Mark Pope, the creator of the [Bounty Hunter Rare Wine Catalog](#) in Napa, California, said he generally stuck to "classic white and red varietals." That didn't stop him from listing a 2003 Casa Solar Tempranillo from Rioja at \$6.95 a bottle in his fall/winter catalogue.

He also opted to feature a 2003 Antonio Candela Barahonda Monastrell-Yecia, which sells for \$13.95 and, Pope said, "drinks like a million bucks." A centuries-old varietal native to Spain, the monastrell grape, known as mourvèdre in France, is best known as a blending grape. Wines made from it are still relatively obscure.

Tempranillos

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A DIFFERENT KIND OF WINE STOMP

The Downtown Napa Deal

by Carey Sweet

Travelers eager to sample the bounty of Napa Valley's vineyards don't necessarily think of Downtown Napa as a prime tasting destination. But in fact, the area has more wine tasting opportunities "than any other place in the world," the Napa Downtown Association boasts. There are now eleven great spots for sipping—from true wine bars and lounges to tasting rooms, wineries and so-called collectives, all within short walking distance of one another. Even easier: Hop on the free Downtown Trolley, which stops in front of or near all the shops.

The bars and tasting rooms have two big advantages over wineries: they can offer many different labels from around the world in one location. "Wine Collectives" are a series of small, bonded wineries legally tied together to present, taste and sell their wines to the public. These collectives give smaller, boutique wineries a presence where otherwise they would have to try to operate their own (expensive) tasting rooms on their own.

Your best bet is to get the **Taste Napa Downtown Discount Card** at www.napadowntown.com. It costs \$20 per person, and cardholders enjoy ten cent wine samples at all of the participating tasting rooms, plus a ten percent discount on retail wine purchases at many of the shops. Following is a list of the participating wine tasting rooms, wineries and wine bars.



Central Salon

changing sampling packages keep the sips particularly interesting and affordable, and this part is priceless: the winemakers often stop in to personally pour and discuss their wines.

Bounty Hunter Rare Wine & Provisions

Bounty Hunter has been a popular catalog merchant of specialty wines from around the world for more than a decade. Things got even better about three years ago, when owner Mark Pope opened his retail shop in the handsome 1888 Semorle Building, in the heart of "happening" Napa.



Customers chill on vintage saddles at The Bounty Hunter Wine Bar

Vintner's Collective

This upscale wine collective, housed within an historic 1875 stone building, is a sophisticated stop for those serious about wine. Visitors enjoy Modern art, an elegant bar and a knowledgeable staff pouring delights from eighteen top-tier wineries including Melka, Judd's Hill, Mi Sueno, Vinoce, and other small-production talents.

Owner Garret Murphy, a native of France, offers experts and novices alike the opportunity to sample some truly special, often obscure and expensive wines. Daily-

Wynn
LAS VEGAS



Bounty Hunter is an ambitious wine enterprise, showcasing forty wines by the glass and more than four hundred in the bottle. Premium, craft and hard-to-find wines are available in abundance, but many excellent recognizable labels can be found as well (and if a favorite's not in stock, BH's "wine scouts" will do their best to track it down for you).

The setting is charmingly rustic Western; bar patrons can sit on vintage saddles until 10 p.m. on weekdays, and 1 a.m. on weekends. The bistro menu ranges from "Fatted Calf" charcuterie to a 22-ounce Prime bone-in rib-eye with bleu cheese. This shop is a must for all wine loving visitors wanting the true, new Napa experience.

COPIA: The American Center for Wine, Food & the Arts

This world-class museum and culinary campus houses the Wine Spectator Tasting Table, where, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, complimentary tastings are offered from Northern California's best wineries. Meet the actual winemakers on Saturdays from noon to 2 p.m.



Garden State at COPIA

"Wine 101" and special topic classes are offered daily, as well as monthly seminars on such interests as the wines of Italy, or wine production basics.

The tasting area is around the corner from Julia's Kitchen (named for the legendary Julia Child), an upscale restaurant presenting Wine Country cuisine. More casual dining and retail wine purchases are available at the American Market Café and Cornucopia gift shop.

As a bonus, Downtown Wine Tasting Card holders gain half-price entrance into the museum and can then browse the exhibits and sign up for free lectures or culinary demonstrations. Also, attend a Wine 101 class and receive a Wine Country Passport discount book (a \$125 value), good at a variety of area destinations.

Rocca Family Vineyards

A new, family-run tasting space that feels like home, with guests sipping wines in a family room-style setting. Winery owners Mary Rocca and husband Eric Grigsby offer tastings in their cozy salon with a few comfy leather chairs, a smattering of tables and a tasting bar. Wines come from their young, Yountville winery, showcasing reds like Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Merlot.

JV Wine & Spirits

This barn-like warehouse hosts a surprisingly upscale little tasting room on the left side of the store, complete with resident sommeliers. The JV Tasting Bar offers samplings from a rotating selection of 40 boutique wines daily, for a low \$5 fee (refundable with purchase). It's open from 2 to 7 p.m. daily.

Friday nights from 5 to 7 p.m. are must-schedules, bringing in local winemakers, winery owners and wine experts for intimate tasting "parties." Many locals drop by JV for these casual pre-dinner get-togethers; at \$2 including cheese and appetizer plates, it's the best happy hour in town.



Robert Craig's Tasting Room Director Rachel Miller

Robert Craig Wine Cellars

This is an honest-to-goodness winery, although one would never guess by the industrial façade and neighborhood location. Yet inside, guests meet tasting room director Rachel Miller, who cheerfully dispenses wine, wisdom and jokes. This bonded winery serves up Cabernets, Syrahs, Zinfandels and Chardonnays, plus their heralded "Affinity"—a signature blend that includes grapes grown in Robin Williams' vineyard on nearby Mt. Veeder.

Though their first vintage goes back to 1992, many locals are still unaware of Robert Craig's under-the-radar existence. Visitors may be surprised to find some superlative wines in this laid back experience. Barrel sampling, release parties and other events take place periodically. Important note: tastings are by appointment only, so call first, Monday through Saturday, 707-252-2250, ext. 1.

Napa General Store

This eclectic store is part of the refurbished Napa Mill mall, which dates to 1884 and is located at the base of Main Street. Besides selling artisan wine country culinary knickknacks, locally produced gourmet items, and offering a satisfying Pan-Asian and deli menu, "The General" has an enjoyable, reasonably priced wine tasting bar offering a variety of California wines.

The riverside tasting bar specializes in wine from small producers — many of just a few hundred cases a year — and bottles are available for shipping (in mixed cases, if desired). Visitors can actually find real bargains here. The outdoor patio (with live music on weekends) overlooking the Napa River is a plus.

Wineries of Napa Valley



August 13 2006

Wine Sediments



I'm doing a full cross-post of my post for Wine Sediments on the Well Fed Network. You can find the full post below and at the site early this week. The site itself is undergoing something of an evolution as a couple of highly esteemed wine blogging colleagues have moved to other projects, but I anticipate

that the scope will evolve to a food and wine aficionado site to fit in with the other sites in the network. If you haven't checked out some of the other "channels" I urge you to do so ... there are some fresh voices and some scary knowledgeable people on food.

I've often thought that a national directory, a Better Business Bureau of sorts, for good living--vino and foodstuffs--would be a fantastic idea. Everybody has a mechanic, a plumber, a drycleaner, a Chinese joint and other day-to-day essentials nailed down, but what of the real essentials of the good life?

I'd have Murray's Cheese from New York City on it, Zingerman's in Ann Arbor, MI for their wonderfully delicious breads and commitment to victuals on the highest order and a host of others.



I'd probably add Bounty Hunter Wines to that list, as well, for their approach to wine and their wine clubs.

A recent discovery for me, Bounty Hunter Wines is something akin to the now legendary J. Peterman catalogs--a lifestyle merchant/cataloguer and pop culture icon after Seinfeld made the company famous years ago when the character Elaine Benes took a job with the company reporting to the eponymous founder.

Like J. Peterman, Bounty Hunter Wines style and verve is rustic, yet approachable, aspirational and charming. Bounty Hunter Wines sells nothing but the good stuff. In their words, with a delicious irreverence to the fundamentals of 4th grade English they say: "Because basically, people just want great stuff."

And, great stuff it is.

Even better, in a nod to relationship building, they have a single person or "Wine Scout" that will work with you from the time you call in and place your first order through the course of

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your relationship—understanding your palate and your wallet tolerance for bottle price.



Despite the fact that their monthly “Killer Cab Club” wine club is roughly akin to taking on another electric bill and a tank of gas for your car on a monthly basis, the rarified air of allocated estate-bottled wines has just become a little more accessible. And, in a balancing of the wine ecosystem, almost seem an entitlement to customers of their wine clubs and mail order business.

Their catalog copy is compelling even for the armchair wine lover.

We taste over 4,000 each year and have longstanding relationships with some of the world's best wineries and winemakers. Consider us your Wine Country insiders. We live here in Napa, eat and drink in our winebar and bistro with the local winemakers, and often get the early scoop on what's really happening in the wineries' cellars (lucky you). That means we often have access to the truly "great stuff" long before most other sources even know about it. Fact is, we stay ahead of the curve and find the wines you want before you know you want them.

In particular, Bounty Hunter Wine has a great way to educate your palate by offering what they call “reference packs.” Any wine pro will say that to understand wine (and your own tastes) you have to drink, drink, and drink some more—understand nuance and your own palate. Bounty Hunter puts together varietal packs that offer three vastly different winemaking executions of the same varietal along with descriptive cards for each in order to convey flavor through words without resorting to a numerical system or other industry canard.

And, while you won't find the Harlan Estate, Screaming Eagle, or even Silver Oak here, but you will find Caymus, Joseph Phelps Insignia, Far Niente, Etude and enough other artisan producers to whet your whistle and lighten your pocketbook.

With wine shipping laws relaxing and the Costco's of the world dominating wine sales, now is a perfect time to add a “Wine Scout” to your cell phone, next to the plumber and after the fishmonger.

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A SUITABLE WARDROBE

WILL'S THOUGHTS ON CLASSIC MEN'S CLOTHING.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2007

Lifestyle: The Bounty Hunter



Only a few times in life have I encountered a supplier of any kind that consistently surpassed my expectations. Napa Valley's The Bounty Hunter is one such. Founded

ten years ago by Mark Pope, The Bounty Hunter offers wines from around the world with an emphasis, as you'd expect, on bottlings from California. In my experience, every bottle on offer is worth tasting.

With wine shipping laws liberalized in many parts of the United States since the Supreme Court ruling of 2005, there's no longer any need to go to a local merchant and attempt to guess which of the hundreds of unfamiliar wines may be worth a try. Bounty Hunter sells only the best. Recent offerings include "single best barrel" Cabernet Sauvignon from Girard and La Jota (from the Premiere Napa Valley auction) as well as staples like the '05 Conundrum from Caymus.

Like other wine purveyors, Bounty Hunter has several Wine Clubs. Their versions feature small production and boutique wines that are not available to the general public.

I like that the company stands behind every bottle. If you purchase a wine that you don't like, they take it back. You pay only the shipping costs.

POSTED BY WILL AT 1:09 PM

LABELS: LIFESTYLE, WINE

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WINEWALKSM

Downtown Napa has the biggest and most centralized collection of wine tasting shops anywhere on the planet. You can walk from one to another in minutes (sometimes it's almost door-to-door), and experience wines from more than **150** different wineries. You'll notice that as you walk, you'll also pass most of Napa's finest restaurants. Do yourself a favor, and stop in during or after your walk for a thoroughly enjoyable meal, whether it be lunch, dinner or a midafternoon snack.

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Most wines available for tasting on the **Napa WineWalkSM** are from small, low-production wineries in the Napa Valley—many of them hard-to-find "cult" wines. Others are from the Pacific Northwest, Europe, South America and elsewhere.

The **Napa WineWalkSM** focuses on "wine bars", which give you the opportunity to taste wines from a number of wineries at a single location. The **Napa WineWalkSM** also includes a number of winery tasting rooms, where a single winery pours samples of the various wines that it makes.

Wine samples on the **Napa WineWalkSM** can vary from an ounce to a full glass. There's a fee, of course, but the **Napa WineWalkSM** is a rare opportunity to not just sample but purchase some of the finest wines in California and in the world. The wine shops and tasting bars will be happy to deliver your wine purchase to your hotel, or arrange for shipment to your home or office, assuming you live in a state where direct delivery is legal. (See WWW.FREETHEGRAPES.ORG for more information.)

Nowhere else can you try so many wines so conveniently. And nowhere else can you buy so many hard-to-find wines knowing with certainty that you'll like them because you just tried them.

Join us on the **Napa WineWalkSM**.

Note: Many of these businesses accept the "Taste Napa Downtown" card which for one fee lets you taste wines at many different places. For more information, see the card's [website](http://WWW.TASTENAPA.COM).

When you actually do the walking, you can start your Napa WineWalkSM anywhere on the route you wish, but with these directions we'll start you off at the Vintner's Collective, at Main Street and Clinton on the edge of Downtown Napa.

Vintner's Collective

1245 Main Street
Napa CA 94559
707.255.7150 Fax: 707.255.7159

WWW.VINTNERSCOLLECTIVE.COM

SEE LOCATION ON MAP

A co-op tasting room representing a number of Napa Valley boutique wineries. This is the only place in the valley you can sample these excellent wines. Wineries include D Cubed Cellars, Eian Vineyards, Frazier Winery, Judd's Hill, Mason Cellars, Melka Wines, Mi Sueño Cellars, Patz & Hall, Strata Vineyards and VINOco

glass, as well as artisan cheeses and charcuterie. Tasting flights of six wines are also available on scheduled evenings. Free wi-fi Internet access.

On to the next stop. Leave Back Room Wines, turn right on Franklin, go to First Street and turn right. Walk two and a half blocks (along the way you'll pass ANNETTE'S CHOCOLATES, CAFFE CICERO, and the historic Goodman Library, built in 1901 and now home to the Napa County Historical Society), and you'll come to Stave Wine Lounge.

Stave Wine Lounge

1149 First Street

Napa CA 94559

707.259.5411

WWW.STAWEWINELOUNGE.COM

SEE LOCATION ON MAP

Wine bar with automatic wine dispensers. Buy a card, then use it to pour yourself one of the many available wines from small Napa Valley producers and elsewhere. The dispensers automatically give you a one-ounce taste. You can also buy a bottle of any of the tasting wines, and take it home or sit back and enjoy it in Stave's comfortable surroundings.

Thirty-two wines available for tasting, including eight international wines. Cost per ounce tasting ranges from \$1.10 to \$9.00. By the bottle from \$10 - \$100. Local wineries include Venge, Igneous, Macauley, Punk dog, Parallel, Trespass and Terraces. Free wi-fi. [Accepts "Taste Napa Downtown" card]

Coming out of Stave, turn right (you'll pass by the HISPANIC AMERICANS OF NAPA COUNTY MURAL) and continue to Main Street. At the corner, where TUSCANY is located, turn right and walk south on Main. Along the way you'll pass Zuzu and PILAR restaurants. Continue for a total of about three blocks (the river is on your left and you'll pass the new courthouse and jail on your right) until you come to the NAPA MILL.

The mill was originally a flour mill and a feed and grain business, but is now a hotel, restaurants and shops, including SWEETIE PIES bakery and VINTAGE SWEET SHOPPE. Your next stop, the Naps General Store, is almost at the end of the brick building.

Napa General Store

500 Main Street

Napa CA 94559

707.259.0762

WWW.NAPAGENERALSTORE.COM

SEE LOCATION ON MAP

A specialty market and cafe. Visitors can choose from a daily selection of a dozen or more reds and whites, most from Northern California vineyards. Current price is \$7 for three wines. [Accepts "Taste Napa Downtown" card]

Leave the General Store and retrace your steps back to First Street, the main street of downtown Napa (just past Veterans Park you'll see DOWNTOWN JOE'S, the only brew pub in the city of Napa). Turn right on First and you'll immediately come to the Bounty Hunter, on your right just before the river.



Bounty Hunter Rare Wine & Provisions

975 First Street

Napa CA 94559

707.255.0622 800.943.9463

WWW.BOUNTYHUNTERWINE.COM

SEE LOCATION ON MAP

Mark Pope focuses on rare, limited-production wines, primarily from California but including wines—and wine paraphernalia—from throughout the world. He's in the historic Semorile Building, constructed in 1888 and located between Main Street and the river.

Mark also offers a wine bar (more than 40 wines by the glass) and bistro fare for tasting and fine snacking. Open until 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday nights, the Bounty Hunter has become a lively and popular hangout. [Accepts "Taste Napa Downtown" card]